

DRAFT
Bellingham Kickoff Meeting
Port of Bellingham
Portfields Pilot
March 25, 2004
Highlights Summary

ATTENDEES

Mike Stoner	<i>Port of Bellingham</i>
Alan Birdsall	<i>Port of Bellingham</i>
Hilary Culverwell	<i>Puget Sound Water Quality Action Team</i>
Steve Saepoff	<i>US Army Corps of Engineers</i>
Linda Garczynski	<i>USEPA Headquarters Brownfields</i>
David Holst	<i>NOAA Headquarters Office of Response and Restoration</i>
Tony Raia	<i>USEPA Headquarters Brownfields</i>
Mary Baker	<i>NOAA</i>
Tim Brincefield	<i>USEPA Region 10</i>
Jen Johnson	<i>NOAA</i>
Ravi Sanga	<i>USEPA Region 10</i>
Robert Neely	<i>NOAA New Bedford, Mass.</i>
Sheila Hardy	<i>City of Bellingham</i>
John Kern	<i>NOAA</i>
Brent Ache	<i>NOAA Headquarters Special Projects Office</i>

Portfields Initiative Kickoff meeting purposes:

- Get the partners together
- Understand the needs of the port for pilot projects
- Identify resources and possible commitments
- Discuss next steps

Welcoming statements and introductions were conducted for the benefit of representatives from the Portfields Initiative. The Port of Bellingham is very honored to be selected as a Portfields project.

Bellingham Bay Pilot Project:

Mike Stoner provided an overview of the Pilot Project. It was initiated in 1996 and funded with a grant from Ecology. Participants went through a goal-setting process that resulted in seven goals and developed the following mission statement: *“To use a new cooperative approach to expedite source control, sediment cleanup and associated habitat restoration in Bellingham Bay.”* This process allowed participants to get to know each other, agency regulatory schemes and local community concerns. The Pilot’s emphasis has been on integrating habitat, land use and cleanup objectives. The result of the Pilot is the October 2000 Comprehensive Strategy, that describes strategies for subareas that take a sustainable approach to evaluating economic, environmental and social issues. We are now a few years into implementing projects and are poised now to move forward on some really big issues in Bellingham Bay. This 2004 spring and summer is a time when many activities are coming together for Bellingham, including the start of

the Portfields Initiative.

Overview of the Portfields Initiative:

Linda Garczynski, the head of USEPA's Brownfields Program in Washington D.C., provided the following remarks regarding the Portfields Initiative.

- Within the federal government, there is now a greater focus on the integration of environmental protection, sustainability and economic vitality. We recognize that the old models (based on litigation, etc.) are not the most effective way to accomplish goals. The best approach is to rely on consensus and collaboration.
- We realized that there was an opportunity to leverage the resources of multiple federal agencies to achieve better outcomes. With the goal of revitalization in mind, 20 federal agencies are working together under the Brownfields Partnership; we have a confluence of interest relative to maritime infrastructure.
- Maritime infrastructure is important to national economic health, can utilize underused resources, have a positive impact toward cleaning up the environment, and is also a good way to address national security for Ports.
- Ms. Garczynski has been running the EPA's Brownfields Program since its inception 9 years ago. Over that time, federal funding has increased for the program, and the return is five to seven times that investment. We've learned that you recycle not just bottles and cans, but land as well. She has sat through many futures visioning discussions; folks are keeping an eye on the future. We don't just walk away from our assets.
- The Bellingham Bay Pilot Project represents a model that we want to implement across the nation. This is precedent setting for the nation.
- We encourage the members of the Pilot to continue your hard work. The Portfields partners will be here for Bellingham and will be learning as we go. We hope to continue this state, federal, local and citizen partnership over time.

Portfields Priorities in Bellingham Bay:

The Port evaluated what projects could really benefit from a lift and what the Portfields agencies can bring to the process. The Port is proposing three projects for implementation through the Portfields Initiative.

1. Squalicum Creek Restoration Project – This project would improve the connection between the creek and Puget Sound and improve economic potential for waterfront industry. The project has had a kickoff meeting and some resources already committed.
2. Central Waterfront – The project involves cleanup, habitat restoration, and the opportunity to move surplus or underused land into active use best for the

community.

3. Coast Guard Facility –The USCG needs an expanded facility on the I & J Waterway to address homeland security and the Port would like to use the Portfields Initiative to help accommodate this expansion.

What Can the Portfields Agencies do for Bellingham?

Mary Baker, the Bellingham Portfields Coordinator for NOAA, described the types of services that Portfields agencies can provide:

- Coordinated and integrated federal services targeted to Bellingham needs
- Technical advice, tools and services
- Filling needs with funding programs and finding other partners
- Specific areas of expertise include:
 - Permitting (DOI, USACE, NOAA)
 - Habitat Restoration, protection and improvement
 - Sediment evaluation, cleanup, dredging
 - Science and planning specific to shorelines and ports
 - Coastal planning
 - Economic and social development (DOJ, DOL, HUD, EDA)
 - Environmental oversight

In summary, Portfields provides a mechanism to focus federal partner attention on the port's priority Portfields projects and, where appropriate, match Portfields federal partner agency program funding and technical support/tools with these projects. It was recognized that the focus and resources of the Portfields federal partners can best be brought to bear if a task-specific "wish list" of needs and hurdles is developed for each of the port's Portfields projects

Project Synergy Discussion: Portfields and the Bellingham Bay Pilot Project

Meeting attendees discussed opportunities for Bellingham Bay within the Portfields Initiative. Several topics were to be discussed in greater detail among the Portfields agencies and the Port at an afternoon meeting following the Work Group meeting. Those topics include:

- Use of USEPA Brownfields assessment and revolving loan fund resources (for Phase I and II sites??) and USEPA technical expertise to support cleanup.
- Mechanisms for Army Corps involvement that could provide project-specific funding, technical resources and permit streamlining.

Additionally, the Work Group is asked to provide ideas to Mike Stoner for assisting Comprehensive Strategy implementation that could be provided by coordinated federal involvement. For example:

- Enabling the resource agencies to devote resources to expedite permit processing for Bellingham Bay projects. This may involve both workload prioritization and earlier,

more involved project specific discussions with agency regulators for earlier conceptual project support.

- Finding a way to streamline the consultation process under ESA.
- Developing a programmatic take permit for conducting post-construction monitoring in Bellingham Bay.

Work Group members are encouraged to contact Mike Stoner with other ideas for leveraging the Portfields Initiative to accomplish longstanding Comprehensive Strategy goals.

Partner Agency Programmatic Capabilities and Commitments to Portfields:

NOAA

Commitments to Bellingham:

- Coordinate the Portfields pilot for the Port of Bellingham, and when needed, coordinate the activities of federal partners
- Provide permit planning, review, and coordinated streamlining
- Provide habitat restoration expertise and investigate availability of funding for specific projects
- Provide technical expertise in GIS, physical oceanography, port navigation issues, sediment evaluation, cleanup and dredging
- Investigate opportunities integrate future port planning with state coastal zone management planning, which might offer opportunities for Section 309 project funding
- Provide a small amount of seed funding in FY04 (for example, to support Squalicum Creek and Central Waterfront planning)

EPA

Commitments to Bellingham:

- Targeted Brownfields Evaluation – contractors can sample and analyze for site characterization
- Brownfields expertise – linking to other programs and resources
- Provide pre-clean up planning funding, when available
- Proactively participate in permit coordination with USACE
- Serve as a consultant on the use of the State Revolving Fund loan program; help the state participate
- Investigate and report back to Bellingham on the annual cycle of Smart Growth Grants (which are not subject to the brownfields statute restrictions)
- Technical support for sediment contamination (e.g., advising on site assessment, study design documents and reviewing studies)
- Helping other partners justify their involvement
- Low interest cleanup loans
- Other grants projects – environmental justice grants – see epa.gov/grants
- Connect to EPA to headquarters Environmental Management Systems and other projects

USACE

Commitments to Bellingham:

- Provide immediate planning expertise for the Squalicum Creek restoration project
- Investigate the USACE Puget Sound Nearshore Initiative for construction grants (e.g., highlighting appropriate aspects of the Squalicum Creek project as “restoring salmon habitat” might make it a target for funding)
- Provide construction, construction management, ecosystem restoration technical expertise and consulting, where funding is provided (the Bellingham Portfields Initiative should investigate mechanisms to fund large projects through the USACE; environmental restoration (e.g., brownfields and sediment restoration versus WRDA-based ecosystem restoration) program/project funding usually comes to USACE for implementation through a Congressional sponsor (and there are usually cost share requirements))
- Investigate where USACE program/project sponsorship or involvement might allow internal permit review versus utilization of the external permit review process (internal permit review can be highly expedited)

HUD and the City of Bellingham

Also based on conversations on 3/15/04

Commitments to Bellingham:

- The City of Bellingham is the applicant for HUD assistance for the Bellingham Bay Waterfront and can potentially serve as the vehicle for passing HUD Section 108 community development guaranteed loan funds to the Port of Bellingham (note that 108 funds can be broadly applied, although these funds are applied after construction, a developer needs to be in place for successful applications and low income housing must result)
- Provide input on structuring projects and developing grant proposals – Squalicum Creek, central waterfront, discussions, advice on economic development “arguments” and planning

MARAD

Based on conversations on 3/15/04

Commitments to Bellingham:

- MARAD can help define opportunities for maintaining maritime uses of the waterfront, can provide planning, facilitation, coordination, connects the players and serves as a catalyst
- Can investigate access to the highway Trust Fund
- Research developers might be interested in Port of Bellingham redevelopment projects

EDA

Based on conversations on 3/15/04

Commitments to Bellingham:

- Notify the Port of Bellingham about deadlines and specific requirements and opportunities for the EDA FY05 grants application cycle

- Advise the Port of Bellingham on producing strong grant applications for Squalicum Creek and Central Waterfront Projects (note that a strong case has to be made for *new* jobs creation)
- Discussions, advice on scoping economic development “arguments” and planning

DOI

Based on conversations on 3/15/04

Commitments to Bellingham:

- Provide permit coordination and review
- Conduct technical studies, where funding is provided (e.g., USGS circulation study for the Squalicum Creek project)
- Provide technical reviews and consulting as resources allow
- Investigate potential funding through the National Park Service “Rails to Trails” program (e.g., for the trail in the Central Waterfront project)

Project Specific Needs:

Central Waterfront:

- Job development
- Community block development
- Grants- mixed use
- Identifies logical resources
- State transportation funding (ferry-DOT)

Squalicum planning work product (Central waterfront ??)

- Public review
- Decision-making
- Two options – full dredge vs. minimal dredging
- Marinas
- Convene a small workgroup to decide the future for EPA and ACOE work
 - Keep everyone informed
 - Implement Waterfront Futures vision
- Land use plan – expand groups
- Habitat needs – implement new subgroup

Other Ideas:

- The state brownfields program funds (Section 128 of CERCLA – funds to state for assessment, which is administered by the Dept. of Ecology) is not subject to Section 107 restrictions
- The City of Bellingham has a good Greenways Program; investigate potential for funding public access and recreation projects
- The Portfields partner agencies should assist the Port of Bellingham in more effectively “counting matching funds,” both dollars and in-kind resources from local partners, as in-kind matches can be very flexible

- There will be a Developers Forum at the 2004 Brownfields Conference, providing an opportunity to find “investors” for brownfields properties or even plans; Bellingham should consider attending this forum (talk to Cherokee, AIG Real Estate about specific properties, develop a portfolio with details on property)
- Suggestion: Coalition could make spring visits to the hill, to government officials and agencies
- Suggestion: Visit the Assistant Secretary of EDA together – coordinate the needs of the three pilot ports
- Agencies could work toward early permitting together since ACOE goes to NOAA and F&W for permits (Ecology could share schedules with ACOE and permitters.
- Create an umbrella permit for Bellingham Bay (need a “take” permit now to do monitoring for each project)
- Investigate use of cleanup money to match WRDA funds
- Investigate DOT resources for multi-modal systems (ferries, railroad: Squalicum)
- Investigate HUD resources for housing development of the waterfront
- Investigate Groundwork Trust funds, which provides seed money for public access projects – EPA has an IAG with National Park Service (start with Squalicum and connect it with pilot and HAT effort; Community based Groundwork - Astoria model)
- Consult Bernie Hargrave, PSNRP (Puget Sound Nearshore Restoration Project) Construction Management. He is evaluating projects throughout Puget Sound (construction funds to restore salmon habitat) – could sponsor Squalicum project

Next Steps

- The Port of Bellingham and the Portfields leads should demonstrate how Portfields, and the partner agencies, will complement the existing Bellingham Bay Demonstration Pilot Work Group and the programs and projects already in place.
- The Port of Bellingham should develop a task-specific “wish list” of needs and hurdles for each of the port’s Portfields projects; this will better allow the Portfields partner agencies to “sign up” to opportunities to provide technical assistance and funding.
- Project Teams will be formed for each of the three Portfields projects:

1. Squalicum Creek Restoration

- *Product:* Will produce a complete (or near complete) planning product for the Brownfields Conference

- *Process:* Add relevant Portfields partners to the Habitat Sub Work Group of the Demonstration Pilot Work Group, and continue with established meeting schedule

2. Central Waterfront Redevelopment

- *Current:* The Port of Bellingham is conducting a public review process in April, May, and June for the Whatcom Waterway Cleanup alternatives – more than likely leading to one of two choices for the cleanup, Alternative A or J
- *Process:* First step is to convene a small work group (Port of Bellingham (Stoner), NOAA (Baker), EPA (Brincefield), and USACE (Saepoff) to brainstorm what exact tasks and funding strategies are associated with the probable two alternatives (e.g., how WRDA applies in the two different scenarios)
- *Process:* Ensure coordination with Waterfront Futures
- *Process:* Keep all Portfields partners informed of what's going on

3. USCG Base Expansion

- *Process:* Form a separate Project Team with relevant Portfields and local partners; bring the U.S. Coast Guard into this team

Portfields Agency Contacts

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ACOE – Steve Saepoff

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